CONFESSION

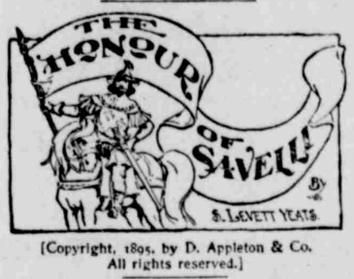
Whom do I love? And must I tell,
Sweetheart, the whole list through?
I love—now let me think a spell—
I love—well, I love you!

Nay, don't protest and hide your face—
Dear me! and blushes, too!
And is it, then, a sad disgrace,
My own, that I love you?

One day you came a-visiting
My heart; no doubt you knew
You entered without knock or ring,
And stayed; so I love you.

You're not so very large, and still,
I fear me it is true
That in my heart no other will
Find place while I love you.

So here's a kiss—a new-signed lease;
Thus love shall aye renew
Your freehold in my heart, and peace
Shall reign, for I love you!
—Chicago Daily Record.



CHAPTER XXIII.—CONTINUED.

As we sat down to breakfast, the chevalier explained that he had made a further search for the letter, but in vain,

"I ought to have told you," I said, "I have found it."

"Where?"

"In the garden—in shreds and tatters."

He became suddenly very silent, and so we finished our meal. All that day I rested, more for the horses' sake than my own, and be sure I did not fail to make frequent inquiry of Angiola's condition, hearing each time she was better, and would certainly see me on the morrow. Whilst I lay resting, my mind was active. I cast up the time I had left at my disposal. I still had four clear days to carry out my mission, and to make my plans to intercept Bozardo. But after my departure in Perugia I had need for extra care, and could not afford to throw away an hour of the four days that were left to me. There were many points to think of. Bozardo would no doubt be strongly escorted, and if the 40,000 ducats he had with him were in gold, they would be difficult to carry away, and would be a great temptation to my men. I could answer for Jacopo and Bande Nere; of course St. Armande was beyond suspicion, my doubts of him were at rest; but for the others? They might or might not yield to temptation. If they did yield, affairs would be serious indeed. I deliberated long and carefully, making up my mind to adopt the following course. Tremouille was but a few miles from me. I would see him, tell of the enterprise which D'Amboise had intrusted to me, and ask him to send a troop, or some trusted men, to whom I could hand over the money in case I succeeded. If he could send these men on to Sassoferrato, I meant to ambuscade on the banks of the Misa, make a dash at Bozardo there, and, if all went well, they could receive the money in a few hours, and relieve me of that anxiety. Of course, Tremouille might refuse to see me; he might even do worse; but I would give him the chance and accept the risk.

When I came to think of it, it was hardly possible that he was unacquainted with the cardinal's design, and I could form no better plan than the one I had resolved upon. I would have to deny myself the pleasure of seeing Angiola on the morrow, but the four days gave me no margin. The day's repose did me much good, and, after supper, which we took about six o'clock, I ordered Castor to be saddled. St. Armande looked surprised, but I wasted no words, telling him briefly that I was bound on business, and that on my return we should have to make an immediate start. I refused all offer of companionship, and shortly after Castor and I were galloping through the glow of a late sunset to the camp of Tremouille.

I skirted the shores of Trasimene, the road being easier there, and, as I went on, could not help wondering to myself what manner of reception I would have from the duke. Good or bad, I was determined to see him, and I soon caught sight of the line of tents, cresting the hills that overhung the defile where Hannibal caught the Romans. The tents were soon lost to view in the gray of the coming night. One by one the camp fires began to light the hills; the mist that rises here after sundown enveloped me, and, slackening speed, I let Castor pick his way up an ascending road, covered with loose stones, and cut into ruts and fissures. In awhile I came to an outpost, and, at once challenged by the sentry, and surrounded by the picket. I explained that I was from Rome to see the duke, and could not possibly give the password. The officer of the watch replied that this was my affair, not his, and that I would have to remain here until the morning, or until a field officer inspected the posts, in which case he would take his orders. There was no help for it, and I resigned myself to circumstances, with an impatient heart. So an hour or two passed, which I beguiled by discourse with the subaltern, telling him of Rome (he was a cadet of the house of Albani), and hearing petty items of news in return, the chief of which was that the Seigneur de Bayard had returned to the camp. Even as he said this, we heard the deep bay of a hound, and I recognized Bran's throat.

"Per Bacco! It is Bayard himself going the grand rounds," exclaimed the subaltern, springing to his feet, and giving the order for the men to stand at attention. In a few minutes we heard the sound of horses' hoofs, the sharp clink of steel scabbards, and a half-dozen horsemen rode up. As they approached, Castor neighed in recognition of his twin brother, and an answering call showed that Pollux knew the greeting, and gave it back. The hound, too, came up, and, raising on his hind feet, fawned a welcome to me. I made myself known to Bayard at once.

"Ciel!" he said, "you are the last man I expected to meet, and you want to see the duke; come with me then."

On our way I told him of the success of my attempt to free Angiola.

"We have just heard of it," he said, "and it has gone far in your favor. In fact, Mme. de la Tremouille, who is back again, could speak of nothing else at supper this evening. It was a brave deed, and I envied your luck, cavaliere."

I told him of my plan, inquiring if he thought Tremouille would give me the assistance I wanted, pointing out that the movement of any troops, where I wanted the detachment to go, could not possibly be taken as a breach of the truce.

"As for the truce," he made answer, "it is in the air. The king has really left Macon at last. It is said that the advance guard under the Seneschal of Beaucaire has already crossed the Ombrone. Tremouille cannot possibly refuse, and here we are."

We pulled up to the entrance of a large pavilion, out of whose open door a broad band of light streamed into the night.

"Follow me," said Bayard, and I did so, the guards saluting respectfully as we entered.

I had not time to look about me, but saw that Tremouille, who was in his armor, was pacing up and down the tent, with his limping gait, and dictating a dispatch to his secretary. He stopped short in his walk, and, greeting Bayard cheerfully, looked at me with a grave surprise.

"This is M. di Savelli," said Bayard. "He has business of such importance with your excellency, that I have taken it upon myself to bring him here."

The duke glanced at me keenly, the thin lines of his lips closing together.

"Are you aware of the risk you run by coming to my camp?" he asked.

"I am perfectly aware, your excellency, but—"

"You must either be a fool, or a very brave man," he interrupted.

"I lay claim to neither honor, my lord, and I take the risk; will you hear me?"

He nodded, and I laid my proposal before him. When I had finished, his face expressed approval.

"Very well," he said, "I will detach Hawkwood. If you succeed, hand the money over to him."

"I understand, my lord," and, bowing, I retired. As I reached the door of the pavilion, I heard the duke's voice again:

"M. di Savelli."

"My lord," and I faced him.

"Succeed in this, and count me as a friend. I give the word of Tremouille."

"I thank your excellency," and, turning again, I went forth. Bayard followed me out.

"I have half a mind to ask you to let me share your adventure," he said; "I am afraid, however, they will not allow me to go. At any rate, I will ride back to the outposts with you—down, Bran," and he swung into the saddle.

When I shook hands with Bayard on parting from him, his last speech was: "Be careful, cavaliere, for Tremouille is a man of his word—if you fail, however, remember the game is not yet lost—good-bye, and good luck."

I turned Castor's head towards the convent, and, leaving the camp fires behind me, went on through the darkness. It was midnight when I reached the villa. Those tough old soldiers, Jacopo and Bande Nere, were on the watch. Everything was ready; and, after sharing a skin of wine all round, we rode out—shadowy figures through the mist, now faintly lit up by a young moon, whose thin crescent lay quietly in the sky. I looked back at the walls of the convent; from a window of an upper chamber a light was shining. Perhaps it was hers! And I bent down my head in a silent prayer for God's help in my fight back to honor.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOO DEARLY BOUGHT.

About a mile from Arcevia the road from Sinigaglia to Rome begins to ascend the oak-shrouded hills whence the Misa has its source, passes Sassoferrato, and then, turning due south, goes on for some nine miles over the mountains. At the point where this road, up to now following the banks of the Misa and advancing in a gentle slope, begins the somewhat abrupt ascent of the outer chain of the Pennine Alps, on a high overhanging rock, covered with twisted and gnarled oaks, stood a ruined and deserted castle. It was of the eleventh century, and originally belonged to the Malatesta, whose battered and defaced scutcheon frowned over the half-falling arch of the gate. Now it was ownerless, but there were tenants there, for the falcon had made her eyrie in its rocks, in the crannies of the falling towers were numberless nests of swallows, on the ruined debris of the walls the little red lizard basked in the sunlight, and, when the night came, the melancholy hoot of the owl was heard, and tawny fox, and gray wild cat, stole forth on plundering quests, from their secure retreats amidst the thorn, the wild serpythum, and the fragments of the overthrown outer wall, which afforded these bandits of nature so safe a hiding place.

For once, however, for many years, the castle was again occupied by man. There were a dozen good horses under the lee of the north wall which still stood intact, and in the great hall, part of whose roof lay open to the sky, a fire of oak logs was burning, whilst around it were gathered Jacopo and my men, cracking jokes and finding the bottom of a wine skin. In a smaller chamber, a little to the right, I sat with St. Armande and the abbe. We, that is the chevalier and myself, had been dicing a little together to kill time, the abbe improving the occasion by reading from his breviary. We had now been here for three days, on the watch for Bozardo's party, but there was no sign of them. They had certainly not gone on, for we had carefully inquired, and were doubtless detained by some reason, of which we knew not the details. In order not to be taken by surprise, I had sent Bande Nere on to scout, with instructions to come back with a free rein, the instant he had news of the party. Two days had passed since he went, there was no sign of him, and I was beginning to feel a little anxious.

"Diavolo!" I exclaimed, "I am getting sick of sitting like a vulture on a rock here. I wish Mr. Bozardo would hasten his steps."

The abbe looked up in mild surprise, and St. Armande put in gently: "The compulsory rest has done your wound good at any rate."

"I fancy, chevalier, I owe more thanks to your skillful doctoring than to the rest. Per Bacco! But I think I shall carry those claw marks to my grave."

"What one carries to the grave does not matter," said the abbe; "it is what one carries beyond the grave that the signor cavaliere should think of."

"True, reverend sir, I trust I may ever remember that," and, rising, I put my hand on St. Armande's shoulder; "come, chevalier, I go to take a turn outside, will you join me?"

He rose with pleasure on his face. On our way out we passed through the great hall, and listened for a moment to Jacopo, who in a tuneful voice was singing a Tuscan love song. So absorbed was he and his audience that they did not observe us, nor did our footfalls attract any attention as we passed out into the open air.

The moon was still young enough for all the stars to be visible, and, leaning over the ruined battlements, we looked out into the night. Far below us we heard the river, murmuring onwards towards the sea; behind us the castle stood, grim and silent, a red light showing from the windows of the hall, through which we could catch the lilting chorus to Jacopo's song.

For a time neither of us spoke, and then, to make some conversation, I turned to my companion.

"Who is that abbe, chevalier, who accompanies you everywhere? Not a tutor, surely?"

"In a way—yes," he answered; "he was born and brought up on our estates, and is a faithful servant of our house—you must know," he went on, "that in Picardy the name of St. Armande is honored as that of the king. I would trust Carillon with more than my life; my honor, if need be; for he and his fathers have served us more faithfully, I fear, than we have served France."

"Not more faithfully than you mean to, though—eh, St. Armande?"

"If I live," was the reply, as he made a slight gesture, a movement of the head that brought back to me the shadowy memory I was always trying to grasp.

"Live—why, of course you will live," I answered.

"I shall not see the sun set to-morrow."

I looked at him blankly for a moment. Moon and stars were sufficient to light his face, so that I could see the sad, far-away eyes, eyes more fit for a saint than a soldier.

"Animo! Do not talk like that. It is nonsense," but I felt a foreboding myself that I could not account for, and it chilled me.

"It is not nonsense," he said, in his dreamy voice, and then, as if rousing suddenly: "Cavaliere—di Savelli—I want you to promise me one thing. Do not hesitate, but promise. It is about myself I ask—will you?" and he held me by the arm with his slight fingers that I felt were shaking. To soothe him I answered, gravely: "I promise."

"I know that I will not live beyond to-morrow. When I die bury me as I am—here—here in this ruin—and—and you will not forget me, will you?"

As he said this his voice took a cadence, his face took an expression that suddenly brought back a hundred old memories, no longer vague and misty, but clear and distinct. In a moment the scales fell from my eyes, and I saw. I seemed to be once more hawking on the banks of the Chiana with madame; I was once more in the aisles of the church at Arezzo, treading down temptation and bidding farewell to a woman who was trying to be strong.

"God in heaven!" I gasped to myself, as I leaned back against the parapet and drew my hand across my forehead, as if to wake myself from a dream. St. Armande did not notice my exclamation; he did not even observe my movement. His own excitement carried him away.

"Promise," he said, and shook my arm in his earnest entreaty.

"As there is a God above me I promise."

"I believe you," he said, simply, "and now I am going in."

I made no offer to bear him company, and his slight figure drifted into the moonlight. I saw it clearly again, making a dark bar against the red glare in the open door of the hall, and then it vanished from view. I was utterly thunderstruck by the discovery I had made. A hundred actions, a hundred tricks of gesture, of speech, of manner, should have disclosed St. Armande's identity to me. Now I knew it, it was all so simple and clear, that I wondered at my denseness in not having guessed through the disguise before. Now that I had discovered it, however, now that my blindness was cured, what was I to do? I resolved on keeping the secret I had probed, and never once letting St. Armande know he was other than what he pretended to be. A great pity came up in my heart, for there was a time when I almost thought I loved this woman, and it required little conceit to see, after what had happened, that madame was prepared to make almost any sacrifice for my sake. I was sorry, more sorry than I can tell, for I knew my own hands were not clean in this matter, and I paced up and down, flinging bitter reproach at myself, and utterly at a loss to plan out some way of escaping from the difficulty in which I was placed. I made up my mind that St. Armande, as I will still speak of the disguised chevalier, should be placed in no danger, resolving that as soon as the affair on which we were engaged was over, that I would send him, or rather her, with a message to the cardinal, and the message was to be one that, I hoped and trusted, would have the effect of making madame cease her foolish prank—I had it at this moment almost in my heart to be angry with her; but I could not, for the small voice that kept whispering to me—

"Thou art not free from blame." I was not; but nothing would induce me to add another wrong to the one I had committed. That in itself was sufficient to haunt me to the grave, and I shivered as I thought of the abbe's words: "It is what one carries beyond the grave that the signor cavaliere should think of."

So alternately reproaching myself and praying for aid, prayers that brought no relief, I passed the night, and in the small hours of the morning stole back into the castle. Round the fire in the great hall, the figures of my followers were stretched, all but one, who kept watch, but recognizing me did not challenge. I passed by softly, and entered the other room. The abbe had dropped asleep over his breviary, the lamp burning low beside him.

Rolled in a cloak, and half reclining against a saddle, St. Armande was in a profound slumber. I took the lamp in my hand, and holding it aloft, surveyed the sleeping figure. A last hope had come to my mind that I was mistaken, that perhaps I was jumping too quickly to conclusions. But no, there was not a doubt of it. There could be no mistaking that fair face with its delicate features, the straight nose, the curved bow of the lips, half hidden under its disguise, the small shapely head with its natural curls of short golden hair—oh! I knew all these too well. It was Doris d'Entrangues without shadow of doubt, and no blind beggar, who groped his way through a life-long darkness, was blinder than I had been. I set down the lamp softly, and with a sick heart stepped back into the hall, where I found room for myself until the morning, which indeed it was already. With the sunrise, I awakened from a fitful sleep by hearing Bande Nere's voice.

"What news?" I asked as I drew the old soldier aside.

"I know that I will not live beyond to-morrow."

"I have been as far as Sinigaglia, excellency, and all goes well. The party left Sinigaglia the morning I arrived, and I followed in their track, letting them keep well ahead of me to avoid suspicion. Last night, however, I passed them. They will be here about noon, maybe a little before."

"The numbers?"

"Ten lances, excellency, for escort. It is those we have to deal with. Then there are about a score of mounted servants, four laden mules, and Monsignore Bozardo."

"Um! That is rather strong, if the servants carry weapons."

"But they march as through a friendly country, signore, the servants going on ahead to prepare for monsignore's arrival. He himself keeps close to the mules, with one or two men, and of course the escort."

"Do you know who commands the escort?"

"No, excellency—I did not wish to risk anything, and asked no questions."

"You are right, and have done well—here are ten crowns."

"Your excellency is generosity itself."

"It is not more than you deserve. Go and get something to eat now, and take as much rest as you can within the next hour."

"Excellency," and Bande Nere stopped back to join his fellows, who surrounded him with eager questions, and there was a bustling and a buckling-to of arms and armour.

When we met a little later my face showed no signs of my discovery to St. Armande, and whilst we breakfasted together I told him that the time was come for which we had been waiting.

"Remember your promise," he said with an affected gayety, but his voice nearly broke down and I saw the abbe glance at him with a deep compassion.

"I will not forget," I answered, "but God grant there may be no need to keep it."

"I should say 'Amen' to that," he answered, "only I cannot."

My plans were already made, and as soon as we had breakfasted we set forth from the castle. The road, as I have already explained, ascended abruptly a short distance from the base of the rock on which the castle was perched. Between the base of the rock and the road was a narrow but thick belt of forest, which afforded admirable concealment, and here we posted ourselves secure from all view. The abbe and St. Armande insisted on accompanying us, and in order to put the chevalier from harm I placed him a little way up the rock, with instructions to charge down as soon as he heard my whistle, which I never intended to blow. The abbe took his station beside him, saying where the chevalier was it was his duty to be. St. Armande held out a small hand to me as I was turning away, and I took it gently for a moment in mine. The quick impulsive movement reminded me much of that day when madame had held the flowers I gathered to her husband's face. Something almost choked me as I turned away hastily, having only strength to repeat my warning—

"Do not move till you hear my whistle."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

AN EXTENSIVE REPERTORY.

A Windy Whistler of Chicago Who Measures His Melody in Statute Miles.

He is a fairly good whistler and has some knowledge of music. He has probably attended the grand opera and recollects some of the airs easiest to bring to mind. He is not a bashful man, nor inclined to hide his light under a bushel. In fact, he distributed melody over seven miles of Chicago territory the other morning, regardless of the fact that the market price of whistling was very bearish. He entered an Alley "L" train at Lexington avenue, opened his musical valve and never left off until he debarked at Fifth avenue and Madison. He broke all records in this city, at least for "continuous performance" whistling.

While he produced some things in old and new opera, he was not limited to mere classics. He warbled popular airs as changes from the more stately numbers in his programme, and tossed in a few marches and two steps, cut in with waltzes and polkas and even condescended to furnish a few "coon" songs for good measure. Every inspiration and expiration was accompanied by a new note in the medley of gems. So continuous and uninterrupted was the flow of soul that the other passengers abandoned all attempts to read the news and in more or less excitement listened to him who whistled.

As soon as he took his seat he puckered his lips and sent forth the prelude and intermezzo by Mascagni. Then he passed to the "Salve Dimora" from "Faust," but became involved in some of its intricacies. He jumped skillfully into "Coal Black Lady," and having wound this up dashed into a favorite march. Then he tackled Walther's song in "Tannhauser" and wrestled with it to good effect. Having accomplished this in three miles of his journey, he got to work on the "Jolly Brothers" waltz, danced through it and back again into romantic opera. He had everything his own way, for nothing feazed him. He was harder to knock out than Sharkey. Remarks in revilement passed over his head and mingled confusedly with the liquid melody which his pursed-up lips sent forth.

One passenger rode three stations farther than necessary in order to observe how long it would last. He got off with the warbler and followed him to the street. Still the music flowed merrily on and the man of many tunes disappeared down the avenue still busy with his mouthpiece.

"Sam Weller in Bath was not half so great as he," muttered the man who followed. "As an all-around, two-handed whistler that man is entitled to a monument."—Chicago Chronicle.

His Effective Retort.

Rev. Patrick Watson, vicar of Earlsfield, a great authority on the Holy Land, who had just died near Cairo, was a stickler for accuracy. An amusing passage of arms once took place between him and the present archbishop of Canterbury. A committee report was under consideration, and Mr. Watson objected to the heading: "Removal of Premises," on the ground that the things inside the premises were removed and not the building. Dr. Temple replied: "I suspect you often tell your wife the kettle boils, but it doesn't." The meeting roared with laughter, and passed on to the next business.—London News.

NEEDED THE SOAP.

The Amiability of Women Shoppers in a Bargain Store Rush Is Truly Fetching.

It was at a department store bargain counter for odds and ends. Women squeezed and elbowed and shoved to get alongside the counter. Frequently two of them happened to pick up the same bargain at one and the same time, and then they both retained their clutch on it and looked daggers at each other until the stronger of the two won the victory or the bargain was rent into ribbons.

A haughty matron with an electric seal coat picked up a box containing three cakes of imported soap for eight cents at the same moment that an humble-looking little woman in a faded tan coat had fastened her grasp on the box.

"I believe I was the first to take hold of this," said the matron in the electric seal coat, freezingly.

The humble-looking little woman held on for a minute, studying her antagonist, then she slowly relaxed her hold on the box.

"Well, you can have it," she said, amiably. "You look as if you need the soap."

The bargain counter is the place to observe how they love one another.—Washington Post.

A Meddlesome Amateur.

"Uncle Bill, what is a political love feast?"

"Well, it is when a big lot of politicians get together and pledge themselves to keep outsiders from getting on to their scraps."—Indianapolis Journal.

Alcoholic or Not.

Customer—My room is full of rats, and—

Drug Clerk—Yes, sir. Do you want bromo or strychnine?—Philadelphia Press.

A bachelor says that widows weep not because of the loss of a husband, but because of the lack of one.—Chicago Daily News.

It isn't so easy to collect as to recollect what men owe you.—Chicago Dispatch.

WILLING TO TRY IT.

No Lineage Necessary as Long as He Had a Sufficiency of the Coin.

"I suppose," she said, "that you had an ancestor in the celebrated little party that 'came over' with William the Conqueror?"

"Perhaps," he replied, "but I have never looked the matter up."

"Of course you are a lineal descendant of some one who came over in the Mayflower?"

"I don't know. It is possible that I am, but I have never hunted up the records."

"Well," she went on, "you are descended from an officer of the revolutionary war, aren't you?"

Finding himself cornered he broke down and confessed.

"My father's name was Szfchzerskendowski, which he changed to Dows with the sanction of the court."

She sat for a moment, almost crushed. Then hope seemed to return to her and she asked:

"How much did you say you expected your father to leave you?"

"I figure that my share of the estate will be about $2,000,000," he said.

"All right," she answered briskly, "we can worry along without the lineage and still be happy, dear."—Chicago Times-Herald.